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# QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF APARTHEID, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII)

Note by the Secretariat

1. By letter dated 24 July 1998, the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations Office at Geneva requested the High Commissioner for Human Rights to circulate as documents of the fiftieth session of the Sub-Commission, under agenda item 2, the statement issued at Asmara by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Eritrea on 3 July 1998 entitled "Ethiopia's gross violations of the human rights of Eritreans living in Ethiopia" and the statement issued on 24 July 1998 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Eritrea entitled "Ethiopia's gross violation of basic human rights". These statements had previously been communicated to the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council and to the Security Council, respectively, and are contained in document A/52/974-S/1998/611 and document S/1998/690, which are available to all participants.

2. In the same letter, the Permanent Representative of Eritrea requested the circulation of a document of the Eritrean News Agency (ERINA) dated 13 July 1998. That document is reproduced herewith as received, in the language of submission only.

Annex

**Eritrean News Agency (ERINA)**
**ERINA Update**
**Monday, July 13, 1998**

The Ethiopian government has been conducting an intensive hate campaign, with few parallels in our contemporary times, through its domestic mass media since the eruption of the border conflict last May. This campaign, which centres on distortion of the root causes of the conflict, the fabrication of outright lies, and particularly a demonization of Eritrean society and its institutions which are routinely portrayed as "racists and fascists," is designed to foment irrational hatred among the Ethiopian people so that they may support the regime's war plans without hesitation. The Ethiopian government appears to be changing gear now to solicit international support for its war aims through a similar campaign in the international press. Recent statements and press releases from the Office of the Government Spokesperson illustrate the extent of this vilification campaign.

i) In one of his inflammatory statements on Tigray Radio on May 28, 1998, the Governor of Tigray Administrative Region, Ghebru Asrat, retorted that "the Eritreans feel superior and look down on the Tigreyans .. They have always claimed and boasted: one germ exterminator can kill thousands of flies, one cat can kill fifty rats." The Ethiopian Foreign Ministry now falsely attributes this quotation to Eritrea's Head of State alleging in its press release of July 9, 1998 "Implying Eritrean superiority, Isaias has previously made insulting references to one flit (fly spray) can kill 1,000 flies."

ii) The same press release alleges that "Eritrea has expelled 200 Ethiopians into Djibouti ... These expulsions come after two and a half hour radio and TV appearance by President Isaias yesterday which was clearly intended to invoke violence against Ethiopian people." This is again pure fabrication. The Ethiopians, most of whom were stranded in Assab due to the closure of the road after the eruption of the conflict, were not expelled but left of their free will. Eighty of them left Assab on July 7, one day before the President's one hour interview with the local TV which occurred on Wednesday, July 8, 1998. The departure of the others had been delayed due to transport problems. (The Assab Administration assisted them through provision of sea transport. Indeed, four of their representatives have sent signed letters of gratitude on behalf of the group to the Assab Administration and to the Immigration Office when they arrived in Djibouti.) The President's interview focused on the prospects for peace, the economy and Ethiopia's incapacity to impose a solution by force. It contained no reference or inflammatory remark of any kind about Ethiopians residing in Eritrea. Furthermore, Eritrea's declared policy, as also embodied in the

resolution adopted by the National Assembly on June 26, 1998, is to ensure the "full respect of the right to live and work of all Ethiopian residents in Eritrea."

iii) In a statement to the foreign press on June 30, 1998, the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry alleged that "Ethiopian prisoners were paraded through the streets of Asmara while the Eritrean authorities encouraged people to stone them." Again, this was a pure fabrication. No such inhumane action ever took place. Moreover, while the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry has been falsely claiming that "about 600 Ethiopians have been imprisoned and continue to be exposed to the worst form of torture," the Ethiopian Charge d'Affaires in Asmara has admitted to UN agencies and the OAU Committee of Ambassadors who visited the capital at the end of June that the alleged "number of detainees was 57." Even this figure was inflated by his own admission as he said that some of these detainees "had been long released while many others were petty traders arrested long before the crisis for ordinary criminal and civil offenses."

iv) The Ethiopian Foreign Ministry is also distorting developments in the peace process. To this end, the Foreign Ministry has arrogated to itself the role of spokesperson for visiting Heads of State. Thus, although President Kabila and President Museveni did not make any public statements regarding their respective visits to both capitals recently, the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry has falsely quoted them as saying that their visits "have failed due to Eritrea's rejection" of their proposals. The reality is again different. And although we do not wish to follow suit to put words in the mouths of these leaders, we are compelled under the circumstances to state the nature of the discussions that took place during their visits to Asmara. President Kabila proposed direct talks between the two leaders which was fully accepted by Eritrea. President Museveni suggested some form of neutral administration in the contested zones until the dispute is resolved through legal and peaceful means. This proposal was again accepted by Eritrea. Thus, if the initiatives have not produced the desired results, the answer must lie in Addis Ababa.

These abhorrent attempts to manipulate public opinion will not work as Ethiopia does not have a monopoly of the truth. But the examples cited above illustrate the extent to which the Government of Ethiopia is prepared to go to deceive public opinion in the footsteps of the Mengistu regime which had created an elaborate Department to fabricate and disseminate false information.

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